

National Council of La Raza, National Disability Rights Network, National District Attorneys Association, National Education Association, National Federation of Filipino American Associations, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHILA), National Italian American Foundation, National Jewish Democratic Council, National Korean American Service and Education Consortium, National Latino Police Officers Association, National League of Cities.

National Mental Health Association, National Multicultural Institute, National Newspaper Publishers Association, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, National Parent Network on Disabilities, National Partnership for Women & Families, National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc., National Rehabilitation Association, National Respite Network, National Sheriffs' Association, National Spinal Cord Injury Association, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, National Therapeutic Recreation Society, National Urban League, National Victim Center, National Women's Law Center, National Youth Advocacy Coalition, NOW—National Organization for Women, NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund, NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby.

Organization of Chinese Americans, ORT—Organization for Educational Resources and Technological Training, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, People For the American Way, Police Executive Research Forum, Police Foundation, Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office, Pride at Work, Project Equality, Inc., Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, The Rabbinical Assembly, Rock the Vote, Service Employees International Union—AFL-CIO, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF), Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT), Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, Spina Bifida Association of America.

Union of Reform Judaism, Union of Needletrades, Industrial & Textile Employees (UNITE), Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ—Office of Church in Society, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, United Methodist Church—General Commission on Religion and Race, The United States Conference of Mayors, United States Student Association, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, The Woman Activist Fund, Inc., Women of Reform Judaism—Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, Women Work!, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics & Ritual, Women's American ORT, YWCA of the USA.

Updated February, 2007

APRIL 30, 2007.

Hon. JAMES P. MCGOVERN,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN MCGOVERN: On behalf of the National Education Association's 3.2 million members, we would like to urge your support for the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (H.R. 1592), scheduled for floor debate this week. Votes associated with these issues may be included in the NEA Legislative Report Card for the 110th Congress.

In spite of our nation's substantial advances toward equality over the past 40 years, prejudice and hatred continue to lead to violence. As educators, NEA members share a commitment to protecting the civil and human rights of our students and communities. We believe the federal government must play a leadership role in confronting criminal acts motivated by prejudice.

NEA has taken aggressive steps to address the issue of hate crimes in the context of schools and school districts. NEA and its affiliates have worked to develop training for educators and programs for students regarding hate crimes and human relations skills. But our efforts in this area will not be successful absent a comprehensive federal/state/local partnership to address hate crimes.

This legislation has strong bipartisan support in Congress; the support of more than 210 law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious groups; and the support of the overwhelming majority of American people. We urge your support for this important initiative.

Sincerely,

DIANE SHUST,
Director of Govern-
ment Relations.

RANDALL MOODY,
Manager of Federal
Advocacy.

RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER
OF REFORM JUDAISM,
April 30, 2007.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE, On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose more than 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.5 million Reform Jews, I urge you to vote for H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 (LLEHCPA).

All violent crimes are reprehensible, but the damage done by hate crimes cannot be measured solely in terms of physical injury or dollars and cents. Hate crimes rend the fabric of our society and fragment communities; they target a whole group of people, not just the individual victim. By providing new authority for federal officials to investigate and prosecute cases in which the violence occurs because of the victim's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, or disability, the LLEHCPA will significantly strengthen the federal response to these horrific crimes.

This legislation only applies to bias-motivated crimes, and will not affect lawful public speech or preaching in any way. States will continue to play the primary role in prosecuting bias-motivated violence, but the LLEHCPA will allow the federal government to intervene in cases where local authorities are either unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute a criminal act as a hate crime.

Studies demonstrate that gay, lesbian, transgender, and disabled persons face a significantly increased risk of violence and harassment based solely on these immutable characteristics. This long-overdue legislation would rightly classify violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability as a hate crime under federal statute. We cannot allow another Congress to slip by without enactment of the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

As Jews, we cherish the biblical commandment found in Leviticus 19:17: "You shall not hate another in your heart." We know all too well the dangers of unchecked persecution and of failing to recognize hate crimes for what they are: acts designed to victimize an entire community. We also take to heart the commandment "You may not stand idly by when your neighbor's blood is being shed" (Leviticus 19:16). Jewish tradition consistently teaches the importance of tolerance and the acceptance of others. Inasmuch as we value the pursuit of justice, we must actively work to improve, open, and make safer our communities.

This bill has come far too close to becoming law for far too long. The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 is one of our organization's top legisla-

tive priorities for the 110th Congress. I urge you to vote for this legislation.

Sincerely,

RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN,
Director and Counsel.

MATTHEW SHEPARD FOUNDATION,
May 2, 2007.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the Matthew Shepard Foundation and our family, we urge you to vote YES and resist any amendments and motions to recommit on the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (LLEHCPA) of 2007 (H.R. 1592).

Hate crimes are an unrelenting and under-addressed problem in the United States. By enacting the LLEHCPA, a crucial step will be taken to address violent crimes committed all too often against individuals based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and disability.

In particular, hate crimes based on sexual orientation are of grave concern. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Unified Crime Reports, approximately 10,000 hate crime incidents based on sexual orientation have been reported since 1998. Consistently, since 1998, hate crimes based on sexual orientation have ranked as the third highest category of reported incidents in the United States. These are just the statistics. Behind these numbers are real human beings—our son Matthew being one of them.

Despite evidence of the grave reality of hate crimes, anti-gay political organizations are spreading misinformation and lies. Many members of Congress have been targeted by these organizations claiming that this legislation would punish religious people for anti-gay speech—dubbing this a "thought crimes bill."

These claims are completely false. This legislation would grant local law enforcement officials federal funds for the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes motivated out of prejudice and hate that result in serious bodily injury and death. Claims that the bill would punish preaching or other ways of speaking out against homosexuality ring particularly hollow because the legislation was specifically crafted to prevent that. Two separate provisions make clear that speech unrelated to the violent crime under consideration could not be used to prove a hate crime. This is about violent actions.

As the parents of a young man killed simply for being gay, we refuse to be silent and let this bill be misconstrued by these organizations. Let each of us be mindful that the only crime of thought we can commit this week would be to let these lies take our collective sights off of this vital bill and the thousands of Americans who have lost their lives to senseless hate violence.

Since Matthew's death, while we have continued our own personal grieving, we have met too many other parents who have lost children in the same way we did. For all of those parents, for our own family, and for Matthew—we are calling on all members of the House of Representatives to vote YES on the H.R. 1592 and to resist any attempts to kill this critical piece of legislation to protect all Americans from violence. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Brad Clark, Outreach & Advocacy Director, at (303) 830-7400 or brad@MatthewShepard.org.

Sincerely,

JUDY SHEPARD,
Executive Director.
DENNIS W. SHEPARD,
Chairman, Board of
Directors.